

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SY-05 SCCT-01 AID-05 IO-13

SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 DHA-02 ACDA-07 /084 W
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O 071830Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6262

S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 4436

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: ASEC, PINS, PINT, AR

SUBJECT: FEDERAL POLICE CHIEF "RESIGNS"

REF: BUENOS AIRES 4272

1. INTERIOR MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE RELEASED LAST NIGHT (JULY 6) ANNOUNCED RESIGNATION OF NEW FEDERAL POLICE CHIEF CORBETTA. CORBETTA HAD RUN INTO TROUBLE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS APPOINTMENT WHEN HE MADE IT CLEAR TO HIS SUBORDINATES THAT HE MEANT WHAT HE SAID IN HIS SPEECH (SEE REFTEL), THAT IS, THAT WHILE HE INTENDED TO PRESS FIGHT AGAINST SUBVERSION TO FULL, HE EXPECTED POLICE TO USE ONLY LEGAL AND ETHICAL METHODS. HE WOULD NOT, HE REPORTEDLY TOLD SUBORDINATES, TOLERATE ANY ILLEGAL ARRESTS, TORTURE OR MURDERS. HE IS SAID TO HAVE WARNED THEM HE INTENDED TO MAKE UNANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF POLICE STATIONS AND THAT IF HE FOUND ANY ILLEGALLY HELD PRISONERS HE WOULD FIRE THOSE RESPONSIBLE AND BRING CHARGES AGAINST THEM IN COURTS.

2. POLICE REACTION AGAINST THEIR NEW CHIEF WAS IMMEDIATE AND INTENSE. MANY RANKING OFFICIALS IN FEDERAL POLICE BEGAN TO COMPLAIN TO ARMY CONTACTS THAT CORBETTA WAS DAMAGING "CAMPAIGN AGAINST SUBVERSION" AND THAT HE WAS "UNRELIABLE"

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AND/OR A "LEFTIST HIMSELF". ONE POLICE SOURCE EVEN INSISTED

TO LEGATT THAT CORBETTA WAS A MONTONERO. BOMBING OF FEDERAL POLICE SECURITY OFFICE ON JULY 2 SIMPLY RAISED POLICE TEMPERS ("UOU SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE GET SOFT ON SUBVERSION*").

3. TRYING TO ASSERT HIS AUTHORITY, ON JULY 5, CORBETTA, IN A WIN OR LOSE SITUATION, FIRED TWO HIGH-RANKING POLICE OFFICIALS, ONE OF WHOM WAS A CLOSE FRIEND OF INTERIOR MINISTER HARGUINDEGUY. IN FIRING THEM, CORBETTA POINTED OUT THAT THE TWO WERE, AS COMMANDERS, RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SECURITY OF BOMBED BUILDING. THEY HAD FAILED IN THEIR RESPONSIBILITY.

4. CORBETTA'S GAMBLE FAILED. POLICE RESISTANCE TO HIM WAS TOO GREAT AND HIS SUPPORT FROM THE INTERIOR MINISTER (AND PERHAPS HIGHER) INSUFFICIENT. FACED WITH A NEAR REVOLT IN THE FEDERAL POLICE, HARGUINDEGUY ASKED FOR CORBETTA'S RESIGNATION. HIS OUSTER IS A DISAPPOINTMENT TO MODERATES AND MAY ENCOURAGE FEDERAL POLICE TO BELIEVE THEY CAN CARRY ON THEIR VIGILANTE-TYPE ACTIVITIES UNIMPEDED. THEY MAY BE RIGHT.

5. CORBETTA IS TO BE REPLACED BY GENERAL EDMUNDO OJEDA. HE HAS THE REPUTATION OF BEING EXTREMELY BRIGHT AND TOUGH. WHETHER OR NOT HE WILL BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE FEDERAL POLICE WHERE CORBETTA FAILED REMAINS TO BE SEEN. INDEED, IT WILL BE A CRITICAL INDICATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS IF HE EVEN MAKES THE EFFORT.
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